

Specialist-level M.S. School Psychology Program: Practicum & Internship Descriptions

Demonstration of Appropriate Professional Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions during Practicum Experience

The two-semester practicum experience (240 hours total) must be completed in pre-approved practicum sites prior to internship. The practicum is intended to provide a part-time pre-professional experience for the school psychology student who has completed preparatory academic coursework in the UCA graduate program. Under the supervision of a qualified School Psychology Specialist or an appropriately credentialed Psychologist, the student will be assigned to a practicum site and perform many of the duties of a School Psychology Specialist. The setting will be a school or agency that provides psychological services to children and adolescents. A properly certified School Psychology Specialist or a Licensed Psychologist at the school or agency assumes primary on-site responsibility for supervision of the student. University-based supervision also is provided on an ongoing basis throughout the practicum experience. More specific information regarding practicum can be found in the practica course syllabi (Psychology 6332 and 6333). In these classes, students will be provided with a list of the minimum professional activities required during their practicum experiences.

Demonstration of Appropriate Professional Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions during Internship Experience

The following information serves as a guide for the internship in School Psychology for use by Interns, UCA faculty, and On-site Supervisors. Four points are discussed below:

1. Purpose of the internship
2. Pre-internship course requirements.
3. Requirements of internship
4. Responsibilities of the Intern, UCA Program Chair, UCA Trainers, and On-site Supervisor

a. Purpose and Philosophy

The internship is a culminating training experience intended to provide a one-year, full-time, supervised experience for the school psychology student who has completed his or her Master of Science degree plus 9 additional hours of graduate coursework at UCA. Under the supervision of a School Psychology Specialist or Licensed Psychologist, the Intern should perform all or most of the duties of a professional School Psychology Specialist. We recognize that the student is not, at this point, an independently competent professional. However, the student will have the theoretical/academic background and practical skills necessary to begin making a contribution to the work of the internship agency almost immediately. The internship is designed to be a mutually beneficial arrangement for both the Intern and internship agency clientele, thus the Intern provides valuable professional services to children and other clientele and the agency provides supervision to guide the student in enhancing his or her professional skills.

b. Pre-internship Course Requirements

Before beginning an internship, the student will complete all the program's course requirements (54 hours) and will have passed the written comprehensive examination. Course requirements are designed to prepare the Intern to function effectively at the internship site. The internship experience is given three hours of graduate credit per semester, for a total of six hours for the school year.

c. Internship Requirements

Setting

The internship will be served in a school or agency that provides psychological services to

children and adolescents in regular and special education settings. Acceptable internship sites would include public and private schools, educational cooperatives, Arkansas Children's Hospital, community mental health centers, residential treatment centers, and diagnostic clinics. At least 600 hours must be completed in a school setting.

Students can begin exploring internship sites at any time during their second full-time year in the program but no later than early in the semester just prior to their anticipated internship. Possible internship sites should be discussed with their Academic Advisor, the School Psychology Program Director, or other school psychology faculty members prior to finalizing any arrangements with the internship agency. Once the student has identified an available site, he/she is to:

- (1) Send written notice to the UCA School Psychology Program Director for approval of the internship site; and
- (2) Complete the application/contract material for the site.

Ideally, these two tasks are to be completed by mid-term of the semester before internship. Approval by the UCA School Psychology Committee is necessary before an internship can begin. It is the student's responsibility to initiate and obtain such approval before beginning the internship.

Time

The internship consists of a minimum of 1,200 clock hours, at least 600 of which must be completed in a school setting. A school setting is defined by NASP as a setting in "which the primary goal is the education of students of diverse backgrounds, characteristics, abilities, disabilities, and needs. Generally, a school setting includes students who are enrolled in Grades prek-12 and has both general education and special education services. The school setting has available an internal or external pupil services unit that includes at least one state-credentialed school psychologist and provided a full range of school psychology services." (From NASP's *Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists 2010*) These hours correspond roughly to two academic semesters of 15 weeks each at 40 hours per week. **Forms will be provided to students for documentation of internship hours and activities.**

Supervision

A School Psychology Specialist or Licensed Psychologist at the school or agency must assume the primary responsibility for supervision of the intern. The On-site Supervisor and Intern must meet for a minimum of two hours, face to face, per week and be accessible to the intern as supervision issues arise. Interns may not work with supervisors who have more than two interns. Supervision activities are to be formally documented on forms provided by the School Psychology Program. The UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor provides periodic supervision for the Intern during the internship year. The Coordinator will assist the intern and the school/agency in making the initial placement of the intern, determining appropriate experiences and training for the intern, identifying and attempting to remedy problems as they occur, and assessing the quality of the intern's work. Such supervision and consultation can occur through letters, telephone calls, and site visits. *Please note that if a student is approved by the SPC to accept a position with a school district that is outside the state of Arkansas, the student is financially responsible for two site visits by the UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor. This responsibility includes all travel, lodging, and food costs.* The Internship Coordinator/Supervisor can supervise no more than twelve interns at any given time.

Activities and Experiences

The professional School Psychology Specialist performs a wide variety of services. The internship will provide the intern with the opportunity to engage in most of the activities necessary to prepare him/her to perform these services. However, it is understood that a professional, in a given setting, may not provide all of the services within his/her repertoire to an equal degree. Each school or agency has specific needs, and an effective professional is responsive to those needs. Similarly, no school or agency is expected to provide all of the possible training experiences for interns.

The following desirable internship experiences are intended to be used as guidelines for the planning of an internship. The On-site Supervisor, UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor, and the Intern will jointly determine the experiences of an internship. In planning an internship, these individuals will take into account the purposes and needs of the school or agency and the interests and competencies of the Intern. However, the internship should include as many of the following as possible:

1. Formal and informal assessment activities
2. Individual and group therapeutic intervention
3. Consultation and collaboration with a variety of professionals, parents, and community members
4. Development and implementation of psycho-educational interventions for academic, cognitive, and social-emotional problems
5. Participation in professional development activities as a provider and/or recipient of such services / activities

Responsibilities

The Intern, On-site Supervisor, and UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor share responsibility for the effectiveness of the internship. If a problem is identified by any one of these individuals, it is that person's responsibility to bring that problem to the attention of the other parties as soon as possible. Examples of problems that might interfere with the effectiveness of the internships include: inappropriate experiences for the Intern, misunderstanding the requirements of the internship, personality conflicts, inappropriate or unprofessional behavior by the Intern, etc. There may be instances in which the UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor speaks with the On-site Supervisor regarding the Intern's professional skills or behaviors that may influence or are influencing the Intern's performance on internship. Since the goal of such discussion would be to provide the Intern with appropriate experiences and supervision, these discussions may not include the Intern directly. Any problem identified by the Intern or On-site Supervisor should be brought to attention of the UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor immediately. The UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor will work with the Intern and the On-site Supervisor to resolve the problem. If no solution can be reached, the internship will be terminated before the end of the semester. Ethical standards of the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists will be followed in all internship activities.

The **Intern** is responsible for discharging his/her assigned duties in a professional manner and for responding to supervision appropriately. The Intern should follow all rules and regulations of the school or agency just as any other employee would. This includes matters such as working hours, time off, vacations, manner of dress, etc.

The **On-site Supervisor** helps determine the most appropriate experiences for the Intern, assigns duties to the Intern, and provides on-going supervision of the Intern's work. The On-site supervisor needs to notify the UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor if a problem develops during the internship that does not seem amenable to solution within the school or agency. At the end each semester of the internship, the On-site Supervisor will be asked to submit a written evaluation of the Intern's work , and to help the UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor determine a grade for the Intern.

The **UCA Internship Coordinator/Supervisor** determines the appropriateness of internship sites, helps place the intern, helps determine the experiences included in the internship, and works with the Intern and the On-site Supervisor as necessary to work out the details of the internship. The Coordinator/Supervisor contacts the On-site Supervisor periodically during the internship year to monitor the progress of the internship. These contacts typically include at least one on-site visit and may also be made by telephone or letter.